



The golden disk was encrusted with uncut rubies and emeralds.

A snarl came from the leopard and with a cry of terror Winnie turned and ran.

THE ADVENTURES OF KATHLYN—By Harold MacGrath

perhaps they perceived this pity, which was fearless.

"She gets a little from me, I suppose," Col. Hare had once answered to a query, "for I've always had a way with four footed things. But I think Ahmed is right. Kathlyn is heaven born. I've seen the night when Broken would be tame beside the pandemonium round about. Yet half an hour after Kit starts the rounds everything quiets down. The gods are in it."

The living room of the bungalow was large and comfortable. The walls were adorned with the heads of wild beasts and their great furry hides shared honors with the Persian rugs on the floor. Hare was a man who would pack up at a moment's notice and go to the far ends of the world to find a perfect black panther, a cheetah with a litter or a great horned rhinoceros. He was tall and broad and amazingly active, for all that his hair and mustache were almost white.

For thirty years or more he had gone about the hazardous enterprise of supplying zoological gardens and circuses with wild beasts. He was known from Hamburg to Singapore, from Bombay to Rio Janeiro. The Numidian lion, the Rajput tiger and the Malayan panther had caused to fear Hare Sahib. He was even now preparing to return to Ceylon for an elephant hunt.

The two daughters went over to the tea table, where a matronly maid was busy with the service. The fragrant odor of tea permeated the room. Hare paused at his desk. Lines suddenly appeared on his bronzed face. He gazed for a space at the calendar. The day was the 15th of July. "Could he go back there, or should he give up the expedition?" He might never return. India and the border countries. What a land, full of beauty and romance, terror and squalor, at once barbaric and civilized! He loved it and hated it, and sometimes feared it, he who had faced on foot many a wounded tiger.

He shrugged, reached into the desk for a box of Jaipur brass enamel and took from it a medal attached to a ribbon. The golden disk was encrusted with uncut rubies and emeralds. "Girls," he called, "come here a moment. Martha, that will be all," with a nod toward the door. "I never showed you this before."

"Goodness gracious!" cried Winnie, reaching out her hand. "Why, it looks like a decoration, father," said Kathlyn. "What lovely stones!" It would make a beautiful pendant.

"Vanity, vanity, all is vanity," said the Colonel, smiling down into their charming faces. "Do you love your old dad?" "Love you?" they exclaimed in unison, indignantly too since the question was an imputation of the fact.

"Would you be lonesome if I took the Big Trek?" whimsically. "Father!" "Dad!"

They pressed about him as vines about an oak.

"Hans! I swear that this shall be the last hunt. I'm rich. We'll get rid of all these brutes and spend the rest of the years seeing the show places. I'm a bit tired myself of jungle fodder. We'll go to Paris, and Berlin, and Rome, and Vienna. And you, Kit, shall go and tell Rodin that you've inherited the spirit of Gerome. And you, Winnie, shall make a stab at grand opera."

Winnie gurgled her delight, but her sister searched her father's eyes. She did not quite like the way he said those words. His voice lacked its usual heartiness and spontaneity.

"Where did you get this medal, father?" she asked.

"That's what I started out to tell you."

"Were you afraid we might wish to wear it or have it made over?" laughed Winnie, who never went below the surface of things.

"No. The truth is I had almost forgotten it. But the preparations for India recalled it to mind. It represents a royal title conferred on me by the King of Allaha. You have never been to India, Kit. Allaha is the name we hunters give that border kingdom. Some day England will gobble it up; only waiting for a good excuse."

"What big thing did you do?" demanded Kathlyn, her eyes still filled with scrutiny.

"What makes you think it was big?" jestingly.

"Because," she answered seriously, "you never do anything but big things. As the lion is among beasts, you are among men."

that," said Kathlyn. "Go on. Tell it all."

The Colonel had recourse to his pipe again. He smoked on till the coal was dead. The girls waited patiently. They knew that his silence meant that he was only marshaling the events in their chronological order.

"The king was a kindly old chap, simple, yet shrewd, and with that slumbrous Oriental way of accomplishing his ends despite all obstacles. Underneath this apparent simplicity I discovered a grim sardonic humor. Trust the Oriental for always having that packed away under his bewildering diplomacy."

He was all alone in the world. He was one of those rare Eastern potentates who wasn't hampered by parasitical relatives. By George, the old boy could have given his kingdom, look, stock and barrel, to the British Government and no one could say him nay. There was a good deal of rumor the last time I was there that when he died England would step in actually.

"The old boy gave me leave to come and go as I pleased, to hunt where and how I would. I had a mighty fine collection. There are tigers and leopards and bears and fat old pythons, forty foot long. Of course, it isn't the tiger country that central India is, but the brutes you find are bigger. I have about sixty beasts there now, and that's mainly why I'm going back. Want to clean it up and ship 'em to Hamburg, where I've a large standing order. I'm going first to Ceylon for some elephants."

The Colonel knocked the ash from his pipe.

"The old boy used to do some trapping himself, and whenever he'd catch a fine specimen he'd turn it over to me. He had a hunting lodge not far from my quarters. One day Ahmed came to me with a message saying that the King commanded my presence at the lodge, where his slaves had trapped a fine leopard. Yes, my dears, slaves. There is even a slave mart at the capital this day. A barbaric fairland, with its good gent and its bad djinn."

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"Because," she answered seriously, "you never do anything but big things. As the lion is among beasts, you are among men."

"Good lord!" The Colonel reached embarrassedly for his pipe, lit it, puffed a few minutes, then laid down the pipe. "India is full of strange tongues and strange kingdoms and principalities. Most of them were dominated by the British raj, some are only protected, while others do about as they please. This State—touching the order—does about as it did since the days of the first white rover who touched the shores of Hind. It is small, but that signifies nothing; for you can brew a mighty poison in a small pot. Well, I happened to save the old king's life."

"I knew it would be something like

king. Seeing the brute make for him, I dashed forward. You see, at ceremonials you're not permitted to carry arms. It had to be with my hands. The leopard knocked the old boy flat and began to maul him. I kicked the brute in the face, swept the king's turban off his head and flung it about the head of the leopard."

"Somehow or other I got him down. Some of the frightened natives came up and with the help of Ahmed we got the brute tied up securely. When the king came around he silently shook hands with me and smiled peculiarly at Umballa, who now came running up."

"And that's how you got those poor hands!" exclaimed Kathlyn, kissing the scars which stood out white against the tan.

"That's how," raising the hands and putting them on Kathlyn's head in a kind of benediction.

"Is that all?" asked Winnie breathlessly.

"Isn't that enough?" he retorted. "Well, what is it, Martha? Dinner?"

"Well, if I haven't cheated you girls out of your tea?"

"Tea?" sniffed Winnie disdainfully. "Do you know, dad, you're awfully mean to Kit and me. If you'd take the trouble you could be more interesting than any book I ever read."

"He doesn't believe his stories would interest vain young ladies," said Kathlyn gravely.

Her father eyed her sharply. Of what was she thinking? In those calm unwavering eyes of hers he saw a question and he feared in his soul she might voice it. He could evade the questions of the volatile Winnie, but there was no setting by Kathlyn with evasions.

Propping he replaced the order in the box, which he put away in a drawer. It was all arrant nonsense, anyhow; nothing could possibly happen; if there did he would feel certain that he no longer dwelt in a real workaday world. The idle whim of a sardonic old man; nothing more than that.

"Father, is the king dead?"

Winnie.

"By George, Kit, the child is beginning to reason out things," he jests.

Winnie laughed, and so did Kathlyn, but she did so because occultly she felt that her father expected her to laugh. She was positively uneasy sometimes in her perspicacity.

The stranger after two or three days of idling casually asked the way to the wild animal farm of his old friend, Col. Hare. It was easy enough to find. At the village inn he was treated with tolerant contempt. These brown fellows were forever coming and going to and fro from the colonel's celebrated farm.

At 5 o'clock in the afternoon of the 31st day of December this East Indian peered cautiously into the French window of the Hare bungalow. The picture he saw there sent a thrill into his heart. She was as fair and beautiful as an houri of Soudi. She sat at a desk, holding a long white envelope in her hand. By and by she put it away and he was particular to note the drawer in which she placed it.

That the dark haired girl at the tea table was equally charming did not stir the watcher. Dark haired women were plentiful in his native land. Yonder was the girl of the photograph the likeness of which had fired his heart for many a day. With the patience of the oriental he stood in the shadow and waited. Sooner or later they would leave.

Midnight. From afar came the mellow notes of the bells in the ancient Spanish mission. The old year was dead, a new year was born, carrying with it the unchanging sound of happiness and misery of promises made and promises broken, of good and evil.

"The packet!" cried Winnie.

Kathlyn recognized in that call that Winnie was only a child. All the responsibility lay upon her shoulders. She ripped the cover from the packet and read the note.

"KATHLYN: If not heard from I'm hell captive in Allaha. Sealed document can save me. Bring it yourself to Allaha by first steamer."

"I knew it," said Kathlyn calmly. The fear in her heart had, as the brown man had anticipated, blinded her to the fact that this was not her father's characteristic blunt scrawl.

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"Hush, Winnie! I must go and go alone. Where's the evening paper? Ah, there it is. Let me see what boat leaves San Francisco to-morrow. The Empress of India, 6 A. M. I must make that. Now you're my father's daughter too, Winnie. You must stay behind and be brave and wait. I shall come back. I shall find father, if I have to rouse all India. Now to pack."

When they arrived at the station the passenger train had just drawn out. For a while Kathlyn felt beaten. She would be compelled to wait another week. It was disheartening.

"Why not try the freight then?" cried Winnie.

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could rule over a brown one by the choice of the latter! And yet that man Umballa's face, when he had shown the king the portraits of his two lovely daughters!

He would send Ahmed. Ahmed knew the business as well as he did. He would send his abdication to the council, giving them the right to choose his successor. He himself would remain home with the girls. Then he gazed up at the moon and smiled grimly.

"Hukum hai!" he murmured in Hindustani. "It is the orders. I've simply got to go. When I recall those rubies and emeralds and pearls. . . . Well, it's not cupidity for myself. It's for the girls. Besides there's the call, the adventure. I've simply got to go. I can't escape it. I must be always on the go. . . . since she died."

A few days later he stood again before the desk in the living room. He was dressed for travel. He sat down and penned a note. From the box which contained the order he extracted a large envelope, heavily sealed. This he balanced in his hand for a moment, frowned, laughed and swore softly. He would abdicate, but at a snug profit. Why not? . . . He was an old fool. Into a still larger envelope he put the sealed envelope and his own note, then wrote upon it. He was blotting it as his daughters entered.

"Come here, my pretty cake," he held out the envelope. "I want you, Kit, to open this on December 31 at midnight. Girls like mysteries, and if you opened it any time but midnight it wouldn't be mysterious. Indeed, I shall probably have you both on the arms of my chair when you open it."

"Is it about the medal?" demanded Winnie.

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"You little angel! I never thought of that!"

But the crew would not hear of it. It was absolutely against the company's rules. Kathlyn could have cried.

"Oh, Kit, Kit!"

"No, money, miss, it's the rules," said the conductor kindly. "I can't do it."

Kathlyn turned in despair toward the station. It was then she saw the boxed lion on the platform. She returned to the conductor of the freight.

"Why isn't that lion shipped?"

"We can't carry a lion without an attendant, miss. You'll have to go with it."

"Very well," replied Kathlyn. She smiled at the conductor confidently. "I'll travel as the lion's attendant. You certainly cannot object to that."

"On December 31 at midnight," she repeated. "All right, father. You must write to us at least once every fortnight."

"I'll cable from Singapore, from Ceylon, and write a long letter from Allaha. Come on. We must be off. Ahmed is waiting."

Some hours later the two girls saw the Pacific Mail steamer move with cold and insolent majesty out toward the Golden Gate. Kathlyn proved rather uncommunicative on the way home. December 31 kept running through her mind. It held a portent of evil. She knew something of the Orient, though she had never visited India. Had her father made an implacable enemy? Was he going into some unknown, unseen danger? December 31, at midnight! Could she hold her curiosity in check that long?

Many of the days that followed dragged, many flew—the first for Kathlyn, the last for Winnie, who now had a beau, a young newspaper man from San Francisco. He came out regularly every Saturday and returned at night. Winnie became, if anything, more flighty than ever. Her father never had young men about. The men he generally gathered round his board were old hunters or sailors. Kathlyn watched this budding romance amusedly. The young man was very nice. But her thoughts were always and eternally with her father.

During the last week in December they arrived at the Palace Hotel in San Francisco. An East Indian, tall, well formed, rather handsome. Except for his brown turban he would have passed unnoticed, for Hindus and Japanese and Chinamen and what nots from the southern seas were every day affairs.

The brown turban, however, and an enormous emerald on one of his fingers produced an effect quite gratifying to him. Vanity in the Oriental is never conspicuous for its absence. The reporters gave him scant attention, though, for this was at a time when the Gaekwar of Baroda was unknown.

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"I guess you've got me," admitted the conductor. "But where the dickens will we put the cat? Every car is closed and locked, and there is not an empty."

"You can easily get the lion in the caboose. I'll see that he doesn't bother any one."

the room, and sooner or later, with the deftness of his breed, he would enter. The leopard he had heard about was nowhere to be seen.

"Winnie," said Kathlyn, "I dread it." Winnie set down the teacup, her eyes brimming.

"What can it all mean? Not a line from father since Colombo, five months gone."

"Do you think—"

"No, not," replied Kathlyn, hastily. "Father sometimes forgets. He may be hunting miles from telegraph wires and railroads; it is only that he should forget us so long. Who knows? He may have dropped down into Borneo. He wanted some pythons, so I heard him say."

The elder sister did not care to instill into the heart of her charge the fear which was in her own.

"Who knows but there may be good news in the envelope? Dad's always doing something like that. New Year's!"

The coffee, released from the kitchen, came bounding in. In his exuberance he knocked over a cloisonne vase. Both girls were glad to welcome this diversion. They rose simultaneously and gave chase. The dog headed for the outdoor studio, where they caught him and made believe they were punishing him.

Quietly the watcher entered through the window, alert and tense. He drew to the desk, found the envelope, steamed it open at the kettle, extracted the sealed envelope and Col Hare's note. He smiled as he read the latter and changed his plans completely. He would not play messenger—he would use a lure instead. With his ear strained for sounds, he wrote and substituted a note. This hour of Soudi would not pause to note the difference in writing; the vitalness of the subject would enchain her thoughts. It was all accomplished in the space of a few minutes. Smiling, he passed out into the fast settling twilight.

They were shipping a lion to San Francisco, and the roaring and confusion were all very satisfactory to the trespasser.

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tured it alone, unaided, may be found in the files of all metropolitan newspapers. Of the brown man who was found hiding in the coat closet of the caboose nothing was said. But the sight of him dismayed Kathlyn and she could have done. Any dark skinned person was now a subtle menace. And when later she saw him peering into the porthole of her stateroom, dismay came terror.

Who was this man